

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE E11THE WASHINGTON POST
10 September 1980**JACK ANDERSON**

Top Brass Sanguine in Bleak Report

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have executed a bizarre reversal of the classic waffling maneuver: they have marched down the hill and back up again.

In their annual report on the U.S. military position, the generals catalogue a hair-raising number of areas where we are hopelessly outgunned by the Soviets, with apparently no likelihood of catching up.

Then, in an effusion of bureaucratic bafflegab, the joint chiefs conclude that everything may be hunky-dory after all.

The 96-page annual report is classified top secret. My associate Dale Van Atta has obtained a copy, and the bulk of it makes depressing reading for anyone who hopes Uncle Sam and the western allies can stand up to the Soviet bloc bullies. Some examples:

- "The overwhelming U.S. advantage in terms of nuclear warheads began eroding in the early 1960s. This decline was temporarily reversed in the early 1970s . . . [but] by the mid-1970s, the decline started again and has been continuous since that time."

- "The continued success of [NATO] strategy has been jeopardized by the rapid modernization of Soviet and Warsaw Pact nuclear and conventional forces."

- "The Soviet Union will hold a 2-to-1 advantage in long-range theater nuclear force weapons by the early 1980s, assuming that NATO modernization programs proceed as planned. In terms of equivalent megatons and hard target kill capability, the Soviet advantage will range from 2-to-1 to 4-to-1. These advantages continue to increase throughout the 1980s."

- "The Soviet drive to modernize the conventional forces of the Warsaw Pact threatens the military balance in Europe, thereby increasing risk of conflict, or, more likely, political intimidation. The United States and its NATO allies have little choice but to offset the growing Warsaw Pact advantage by strengthening and modernizing their own land, sea and air forces or be forced to accept the consequences of military inferiority."

- "Current assessments are that NATO forces might be successful . . . so long as the combat is restricted to a stable front where the defender can take advantage of prepared positions. NATO's defense posture however, is vulnerable to breakthroughs, and has inadequate forces available for reinforcements or . . . a mobile reserve."

- Concerning tanks, other armored vehicles, artillery and attack helicopters, it is "readily apparent all trends are unfavorable to the United States and NATO."

- "Tactical air balance is much closer," despite a 2-to-1 numerical edge for the Warsaw Pact in the central region, because of NATO's "qualitative lead in high performance aircraft."

- Even with "a sharp reversal of the trend of declining American defense spending," there is no way to reverse the Soviet-U.S. imbalance for several years.

Incredibly, after painting this grim picture of the nation's plummeting military fortunes, the joint chiefs somehow conclude that the United States has not "irretrievably yielded its former position of military preeminence to the Soviet Union."

The Pentagon Pollyannas explain

their conclusions this way: The United States continues to enjoy important military strengths vis-a-vis Soviet forces . . . U.S. forces of all services are generally more versatile. The United States maintains a qualitative edge in many weapons systems and equipment. . . .

"Finally," says the report, in what sounds like a script from an old World War II movie, "while the military advantages which the United States derives from its democratic political system and superior technological base defy easy quantification, there is no question but that they weigh heavily in the military balance."

Pick the paragraphs of your choice, and either sleep better or be scared stiff.